

Message Text

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43

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

PC-01 OMB-01 /064 W

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R 221430Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7802

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, NU

SUBJECT: LA PRENSA SUSPENDS PUBLICATION ONE DAY IN CENSORSHIP
SQUABBLE

REF: MANAGUA 3146

1. OPPOSITION DAILY LA PRENSA FAILED TO APPEAR FOR ONE DAY AS A RESULT OF A DEADLOCK WITH THE CENSORS ON AUGUST 20. LA PRENSA ATTEMPTED TO PUBLISH AN ARTICLE ON LOCAL HOSPITAL SERVICES, TYING IT IN WITH RECENT DEATH OF OPPOSITION LEADER MANOLO MORALES WHO WAS ALLEGEDLY DENIED MEDICAL ATTENTION AT TWO GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS BEFORE HE SUCCUMBED TO A HEART ATTACK AUGUST 10 (REFTEL). THE CENSORS FIRST APPROVED THE ITEM, BUT THEN THOUGHT BETTER OF IT, AFTER THE PRESS RUN HAD BEGUN. AN ARGUMENT BETWEEN LA PRENSA DIRECTOR PEDRO JOAQUIN CHAMORRO AND CENSORS ENSUED WHICH RESULTED IN THE CENSORS EXCISING SEVERAL MORE STORIES WHICH HAD ALREADY BEEN PASSED. CHAMORRO REFUSED TO PUBLISH ON THIS BASIS, REQUESTING A CLARIFICATION FROM MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT ANTONIO MORA, WHO OSTENSIBLY IS IN CHARGE OF CENSORSHIP. IN TYPICAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FASHION, MORA DECLINED TO DECIDE, PRESUMABLY BUCKING THE

MATTER TO PRESIDENT SOMOZA WITH HIS OWN ADVICE. WHILE CHAMORRO WAS REPORTEDLY ADAMANT ABOUT REFUSING TO PUBLISH UNTIL A TONED DOWN STORY ON HOSPITAL SITUATION WAS RELEASED, LA PRENSA WAS BACK ON STREETS NEXT DAY WITH AD-BLOATED EDITION AND NO HOSPITAL STORY.

2. COMMENT: CHAMORRO OBVIOUSLY NOT PREPARED FOR CONFRONTATION ON CENSORSHIP ISSUE AND LOST FACE AS A RESULT.

3. HOWEVER, THE HOSPITAL SITUATION MAY ONCE AGAIN BE DEVELOPING INTO A CONFRONTATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITON FORCES. MORALES' DEATH HAS ILLUMINATED FOR MANY THE ACKNOWLEDGED SHORTCOMINGS OF GOVERNMENT-RUN HOSPITALS AT A TIME WHEN THE HOSPITAL WORKERS MAY BE MOBILIZING FOR A STRIKE. THE LAST TIME LA PRENSA DID NOT COME OUT COINCIDENTALLY WAS WHEN IT REFUSED TO PUBLISH UNDER CENSORSHIP IMPOSED DURING A HOSPITAL WORKERS' STRIKE IN SPRING 1974. GOVERNMENT, APPARENTLY FEARING A REPLAY OF THE 1974 TROUBLES, WITH THE ADDED BURDEN OF DEFENDING ITSELF FROM CHARGES OF NEGLIGENCE IN THE MORALES' DEATH, HAS STIFLED LA PRENSA ATTEMPTS TO PUBLISH ALMOST ANY NEWS AT ALL ON THE HOSPITAL SITUATION.

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